

Rob Barry

## SECRET AGENTS NO MORE

Agents of Fortune



**Time was when cricketers with agents were something of a novelty. And then came the cash. Bucketloads of it, if you believe the Twenty20-fuelled reports. AOC asked our favourite agent Rob Barry (he helped us beat Wisden recently) of Total Sports Promotions to tell us exactly how the times they are a-changin'.**

**AOC:** Agents in cricket. What's that all about?

**RB:** I guess the role of any decent agent is to streamline a player's life on and off the field. We at TSP provide a comprehensive range of services for elite cricketers to maximise their earning potential. We introduce new sponsors, promotional activities and media contacts to create a platform to multiply net worth over a career.

**AOC:** How has being an agent changed in last few years?

**RB:** Cricket as an industry has evolved rapidly recently, with global media interest and major commercial associations now in place. I'd say the opportunities for elite players to benefit from new markets and improved financial conditions have increased tenfold.

**AOC:** And the effect of the IPL?

**RB:** Huge. Whilst it is not open to all at domestic level, the trickle-down effect of hype and pull factor for next generation stars like Ravi Bopara has helped create a real buzz around the game.

**AOC:** What about the EPL? and Stanford?

**RB:** Likewise, the EPL and Stanford competitions will continue to boost the potential earning power of English cricketers. The fact that a billionaire businessman is prepared to invest so much money simply reinforces the idea that cricket is entering a new era. Of course the pressures this attention brings creates issues. Clearly, as in football with players who rise too quickly, new money brings with it a level of responsibility.

**AOC:** So why should a young player get an agent?

**RB:** The common misconception is that only internationals and top county talent warrant professional representation. But the game, and the earning power of the next generation of English players, is evolving rapidly. That means that the risk of a player overlooking commercial opportunities is greater than ever before. Obviously an agent who is mandated to promote the player will help prevent outside distractions and ensure performance on the field is not adversely affected.

**AOC:** So what do the players get out of it?

**RB:** I can't speak for all agencies out there but we guarantee results - operating a capped and selective client list, we recorded an average net basic salary increase of

over 25 per cent in both 2006 and 2007 through tailored contract negotiations. This is independent from the financial advice our clients receive and numerous commercial opportunities available.

**AOC:** Are you tarred with the football agent brush?

**RB:** It is par for the course to be stereotyped as a sleazy agent. The quotes in the media surrounding the handling of footballers like Ronaldo are consistently negative. Naturally, to make this link with other agents operating in other sports is logical, however unjustified. Of course there are guys out there who let players down, but being registered with ECB does ensure a level of transparency with clubs and players alike.

**AOC:** Are the players greedy? Realistic? Clueless?

**RB:** The benefit of dealing with professional cricketers is that the majority are completely grounded and level-headed. Often humbled by their debut in first team cricket, they are perhaps naively almost grateful for the first contract that comes their way. That may be changing slightly as the amount of money on offer in some competitions becomes reality, but in general, they are a great bunch and all power to them.

**The trickle-down effect of hype and pull factor for next generation stars like Ravi Bopara has helped create a real buzz around the game - ROB BARRY, AGENT**



**The PCA have offered a free negotiator service to its members for the last three years and recently completed David Sales' new four-year contract at Northants. For more information, contact Ian Smith at the PCA.**